

**●Audubon of Southwest Florida ●Collier County Audubon Society  
●Sanibel-Captiva Audubon Society**

December 15, 2008

Governing Board, South Florida Water Management District  
Eric Buermann, Chair  
3301 Gun Club Road  
West Palm Beach, FL 33406  
Via email

RE: Support for purchase of US Sugar land for restoration purposes

Dear Board Members:

We, three Audubon chapters in Southwest Florida, are writing to express our collective strong support for the purchase of approximately 180,000 acres of US Sugar's land. This is an historic and vital opportunity to obtain an effective quantity of acreage for storage and treatment of water that ultimately must be sent from Lake Okeechobee south to the Everglades and Florida Bay. This is particularly critical for all of the interests (economies, resources, citizens) around the two coastal estuaries who have suffered tremendously from the impacts of unavoidable harmful releases from the Lake. These impacts make the \$1.34 billion price for the US Sugar lands acceptable in comparison in the long run.

However, we recognize several *shortcomings* in the current proposed deal which we urge you to address as effectively as possible, among which are:

1. The absence of assurances of assistance for the economies of the Glades communities impacted by the loss of US Sugar operations. Such assistance need not be monetary, but should include planning and advocacy for economic alternatives and diversity.
2. The below market leaseback of farmland for seven years risks undermining necessary land swaps for restoration.
3. Lack of flexibility to remove land from agriculture early for restoration as planning advances.

Again, we strongly support this land acquisition and trust your ability to accomplish this by the most effective means.

Sincerely,

Alan Keller, President  
Collier County Audubon Society  
1020 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue, South, Suite 2  
Naples, FL 34102  
[audubon@collieraudubon.org](mailto:audubon@collieraudubon.org)

Maria Quasius, President  
Audubon of Southwest Florida  
P.O. Box 61041  
Ft. Myers, FL 33906-1041  
[info@audubonswfl.org](mailto:info@audubonswfl.org)

Paul Andrews, President  
Sanibel-Captiva Audubon Society  
PO Box 957  
Sanibel, FL 33957  
[sancapaudubon@yahoo.com](mailto:sancapaudubon@yahoo.com)